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AUTHOR	Crane, Kelli; Skinner, Becky
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ABSTRACT

This paper is a guide to mapping community resources as a way of identifying assets and resources that can be used to aid students with disabilities as they transition from school to adulthood. Discussion of the principles of community resource mapping (relationship-driven and across programmatic and geographic boundaries) is followed by a description of the mapping process, which starts with establishing a shared vision, definitions, priorities, and desired results. Benefits of mapping are then specified, including gaining in depth information about an agency, identifying transition needs of youth with disabilities, and developing policy recommendations across agencies. Finally, examples of mapping missions are described, including a local level effort to connect community services to youth with disabilities in Lexington, Kentucky, and a state level effort to improve the career and workforce development of youth in Minnesota. A table details specific mapping activities under four broad steps: (1) pre-mapping/assessment; (2) mapping; (3) implementing your map for strategic results; and (4) evaluation/mid-course corrections. A resource guide includes contacts in Minnesota and Kentucky and relevant organizational or print resources. (DB)

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NCSET Information Brief

By
Kelli Crane
Becky Skinner

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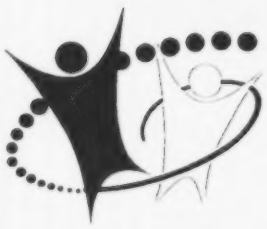
Addressing Trends and Developments in Secondary Education and Transition



National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

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Community Resource Mapping: A Strategy for Promoting Successful Transition for Youth with Disabilities

By Kelli Crane and Becky Skinner

Introduction

This decade has brought with it several disturbing trends: large numbers of high school drop-outs; high-profile incidents involving youth in violence; and projections of labor shortages coupled with the rising and significant need among employers for workers with specialized talents. As a result, there is a growing interest among communities to invest in youth. Communities, including schools, need strategies to improve working relationships that prepare young people as they transition to adulthood.

This support encompasses strategies that ensure high academic achievement, completion of high school, postsecondary enrollment, and competitive employment. Single programs are not comprehensive enough to meet the needs of all youth. As a result, communities that want more effective and efficient ways of providing these services are finding ways to better connect individual agency resources into a single system for youth. Many communities, states, and governments are utilizing mapping strategies. Community Resource Mapping facilitates the identification, alignment, and leveraging of community resources to improve the educational, employment, and developmental needs of all youth, including youth with disabilities.

What is Community Resource Mapping?

Mapping provides an alternative approach to the more common "needs" or "deficit" models of youth services. Mapping focuses on what communities have to offer by identifying assets and resources that can be used for building a system. It is not a "one-shot" drive to create a published list or directory, but rather a catalyst for joint planning and professional development, resource and cost sharing, and performance-based management of programs and services.

Although there is no common definition for mapping, it is, generally, a methodology used to link community resources with an agreed upon vision, organizational goals, strategies, or expected outcomes. There are several principles that are unique to mapping efforts. First, mapping strategies focus on what is already present in the community. The idea is to build on the strengths within a community. Second, mapping is relationship-driven. Key to mapping efforts is the development of partnerships—a group of equals with a common interest working together over a sustained period of time to accomplish common goals. Third, mapping embraces the notion that to realize vision and meet goals, a community may have to work across programmatic and geographic boundaries. These principles provide the foundation for the mapping process.

The Mapping Process

Communities have myriad resources and activities directly and indirectly related to meeting the needs of youth. Yet, these resources are commonly duplicative when used in isolation. Fortunately, mapping these youth resources is a straightforward process. It starts with establishing a shared vision, definitions, priorities, and desired results.

For example, a community vision might be to improve postschool results for youth with disabilities. Some goals within this vision might include the reduction of dropout rates, or an increase in the number of students pursuing postsecondary education. Mapping can address curriculum, financial resources, human resources, policies and legislation, state academic standards, and youth and adult services related to these goals.

Regardless of where mapping takes place or the content being mapped, the process is the same. Once a vision and aligned goals are recognized, community partners must work together to identify the type of mapping to be completed, data collection strategies, and related timelines. It should be noted that the time needed to complete resource mapping varies from site to site. Once data are collected, key stakeholders analyze the data to identify assets and overlaps, as well as any priorities that lack resources. Community partners then design strategies to build on strengths and eliminate gaps. The last step in the process is the implementation of the action plan or strategies designed by the stakeholders—employing the resource map in a strategic way to accomplish the established vision and goals of the community. It is critical throughout the mapping process that partners meet on a regular basis and that a leader convenes the group.

Benefits of Mapping

The benefits of resource mapping are many. As a result of taking part in this process, communities can develop a more results-driven system that supports an improved secondary school experience, higher rates of post-secondary school enrollment and completion, and successful adult outcomes including competitive employment and community living. Creating a comprehensive system enables all young people to access services that allow them to lead full, productive lives.

Specifically, the resource mapping process can help a community (1) gain in-depth information about an agency's policies, procedures, funding streams, and collaborative practices (2) identify opportunities and challenges for meeting the transition needs of youth with disabilities, and (3) provide a comprehensive set of policy recommendations across agencies, along with opportunities for interagency collaboration.

Other benefits include:

- Identification of new resources to develop, enhance and sustain goals;
- Determination of whether existing resources are being used effectively to achieve expected outcomes;
- Improved alignment and coordination of resources;
- Enhanced coordination and collaboration among stakeholders with relevant resources; and
- Development of new policies and legislation to better meet goals and objectives.

In summary, mapping is a process that requires strong partnerships; clear goals that everyone in the partnership support; good communication; commitment to collecting relevant data and analyzing the data for gaps and overlaps; on-going evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; and specific, strategic actions based on the information learned.

Examples of Mapping Efforts

Instead of using planning strategies driven by funding sources and categories of youth, some communities are building systems that promote strong partnerships and utilize diverse community resources. This includes planning more closely with personnel outside of the disability field and working in partnership with broader, more generic youth providers. Examples of these efforts exist across the United States. This brief will focus on specific mapping initiatives in Kentucky and Minnesota.

Example: Local Level Mapping

In Kentucky, several communities are working to better connect resources for youth with disabilities to broader community services focused on youth development. Citizens of Lexington, for example, engaged in the mapping process because they wanted to (1) identify the resources available for youth with disabilities during the transition process, (2) discover ways to enhance school and postschool options available to youth, and (3) make broader, more generic youth resources available to all youth in the community.

Because stakeholders in Lexington have had success collaborating on past initiatives, they were easily able to bring together a broad group of stakeholders to begin the mapping process. Although the group initially came together to improve transition services, they did not limit themselves to disability-specific service providers and professionals. At the table were representatives from their local one-stop, community-based organizations, youth

Table 1

Mapping is a process that requires a strong partnership; clear goals that everyone in the partnership supports; good communication; commitment to collecting relevant data and analyzing the data for gaps and overlaps; on-going evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; and specific, strategic actions based on the information learned once the map is completed.

Step 1: Pre-Mapping /Assessment

Visioning

- "Scan" the future-- why collaborate?
- Develop consensus around the need to do business in coordination and align resources
- Identify key themes to guide your process and decision-making
- Identify the customers of your actions
- Identify the benefits and beneficiaries of your actions

Goal-Setting

- Identify the desired results
- Set measurable objectives
- Get and give permission to think creatively from funding sources, others

Partnership-Building

- Define and commit to maintaining an effective partnership
- Identify all current and potential partners
- Encourage diversity of the team
- Select a credible, objective "convener"
- Build a common language/definitions
- Recognize and address the needs of individual partners (identify "what's in it" for partners)

Step 2: Mapping

Selecting a Process

- Select a process to gather data; partners commit to contributing timely, accurate information
- Include fund utilization: Are you making the most of your current resources?
- Include resource identification: What new resources could you use/align to meet your goals?
- Include community asset analysis: What does your community have to offer that assists you in meeting your goals?
- Include policy alignment: How well do your state/local policies currently support your goals? How can resource mapping further support your state/local policies, practices and goals?
- Identify gaps, intersections, and any obstacles to alignment

Identifying and Collecting Data

- Identify content/goal to be mapped
- Determine how you will collect data
- Collect and validate data
- Stay focused on your goals—don't follow the funds

Developing your Products

- Synthesize findings keeping original goals in mind
- Present information in useable formats for various target audiences
- Communicate trends

Step 3: Implementing Your Map for Strategic Results

Strategic Planning

- Design a plan to better align the resources you have identified
- Maintain consensus among partners
- Address challenges to implementing your plan

Communication Strategies

- Keep key stakeholders informed
- Create an atmosphere conducive to change
- Do the work of sustaining a healthy partnership
- Use technology effectively to communicate and disseminate information

Supporting Community Action

- Give permission to think and act creatively
- Provide recognition for local innovation and quality
- Focus on accountability—set goals and measure progress
- Provide networking opportunities

Step 4: Evaluation/Mid-course Corrections

Keeping Current

- Update vision, goals and plan as needed
- Keep map up-to-date

Continuing to Measure

- Gauge progress and impact
- Focus on real-time assessment rather than just summative evaluation
- Capture benefits
- Communicate results, challenges

Maintaining Momentum

- Retool/expand your partnership
- Maintain an environment conducive to change
- Be prepared to deal with unexpected challenges

intermediary organizations, and a representative from the mayor's office. Group members started their work by recognizing the strengths in their community. In doing so, they realized that they should focus their planning not only on youth with disabilities, but *all* youth in the community. They reasoned that ultimately, this approach will provide better access to resources in the community for any youth who needs them.

Lexington's vision is to have a community network that partners with youth to identify and provide resources, and to support them in healthy youth development. Although Lexington is still in the beginning stages of mapping, participants see the benefits—identifying resources and building partnerships that improve youth services. The team plans to create more partnerships with a broader group of community stakeholders, including youth, and to continue to collect information about resources, gaps, and overlaps.

Example: State Level Mapping

In Minnesota, the mapping initiative was originally started by the leaders in the state's Department of Economic Security, and Department of Children, Families & Learning, as well as the state college and university systems. These leaders were interested in improving the career and workforce development of youth across the state.

To kick off the resource mapping strategy, state-level leaders held a series of regional training events throughout the state. These events were designed to bring together community teams of education and workforce representatives to learn how to discover, leverage, and align community resources and services to improve the educational, employment, and development needs of all youth in their communities. As a result, 60 community teams from across the state gained a better understanding of the resources in their community and how to align them to meet the needs of youth.

Soon after the start of the mapping initiative, participants realized that representatives from the Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) should be engaged. In Minnesota, the CTICs are responsible for bringing together agencies that assist youth with disabilities as they make the transition into adult life. One of the six mandated functions of the CTICs is to identify current community services, programs, and funding sources for secondary and postsecondary youth with disabilities and their families. The resource mapping strategy already begun at the state level clearly aligned with the work that the CTICs were mandated to complete. Thus, leaders in the state connected the CTICs to the existing resource mapping efforts already underway. The relationship among the Hennepin, Carver, Scott Youth Council, and the Northwest Hennepin CTIC is an example of a partnership between the generic youth employment system and the transition system that serves youth with disabilities.

Currently, partners at the state and local levels are designing an electronic database of all community youth resources and services. They plan to use it as a communication tool among community stakeholders, and as a way to inform youth and families of available services.

In addition, the Northern Lights CTIC Web site is under construction. The Interagency Resource Mapping Project has produced a poster version of the map for dissemination. The Northern Lights CTIC, in conjunction with the Cloquet Area Special Education cooperative, serves five counties in Northern Minnesota.

Also, the Mankato Area CTIC has developed a Web site, "Transition Connections" to provide transition information in the areas of Housing, Recreation-Leisure-Social, Advocacy-Support, Counseling, Legal-Guardianship, Work, Health-Safety, Financial, Transportation, and Education. The address is: *www.isd77.k12.mn.us/CTIC/.*

Summary

There is a growing number of states and localities convening stakeholders to engage in resource mapping. To date these efforts are at the developmental stage but many states and localities believe that this process has promoted interagency collaboration and a better use of both human and financial resources. In Kentucky and Minnesota, resource mapping efforts are continuing to refine their mission and goals based on ongoing feedback, evaluation, and mid-course corrections.

Authors Kelli Crane and Becky Skinner are with TransCen, Inc., and The McKenzie Group, respectively.

Contacts

NCSET resource mapping contact:
Kelli Crane
TransCen, Inc.
451 Hungerford Drive, Suite 700
Rockville, MD 20850
phone: 301-424-2002, ext. 224
kcrane@transcen.org

Minnesota
For further information about resource mapping efforts in Minnesota, contact:
Jayne Spain
MN Department of Children, Families, and Learning
1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113-4266
phone: 651-582-8515
jayne.spain@state.mn.us

Kentucky
For further information about resource mapping efforts in Kentucky, contact:
Sandra Conkin
Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
595 S. Keeneland
Richmond, KY 40495
phone: 859-623-8682
sandyl.conkin@mail.state.ky.us

General Resources

Center for Youth Development & Policy Research
Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20009
http://www.aed.org/us/youth.html

The Community Youth Mapping (CYM) project at the Center for Youth Development & Policy Research is based on the premise that not all youth data needs to focus on problems. Rather, CYM is a catalyst for motivating youth by collecting information on places to go, things to do, and available opportunities and services.

The McKenzie Group
1101 17th Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036
phone: 202-466-1111
www.mckenziegroup.com

The McKenzie Group (TMG), an educational consulting firm, has designed mapping services to assist their clients in meeting and sustaining strategic goals and objectives, particularly those related to education and youth development. TMG provides a variety of mapping services, including community asset analysis, resource utilization analysis, and policy/legislative mapping analysis.

School and Main Institute
225 Friend Street, # 11, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02114
phone: 800-873-2120
http://www.schoolandmain.org/

This 501(c)(3) non-profit organization helps practitioners design results-focused strategies for serving youth, and master the partnership skills needed to achieve these results. SMI teaches practitioners how to navigate complex workforce preparation and educational environments so they can build long-term solutions for the challenges facing young people. Their resource-mapping efforts support local, regional, and state-level efforts.

Search Institute
615 First Avenue NE, Suite 125
Minneapolis, MN 55413
phone: 800-888-7828
www.search-institute.org

The Search Institute's mission is to advance the well-being of adolescents and children by generating knowledge and promoting its application. To accomplish this mission, the Search Institute has developed a framework of 40 developmental assets, which are positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need in order to be healthy, caring, and responsible.

Related Resources

Resource Mapping: Atlas for Sustainability (1999). Denver, CO: Colorado State Department of Education.

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National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD),
University of Minnesota, 6 Pattee Hall,
150 Pillsbury Dr. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455

Tel: 612.624.2097; Fax: 612.624.9344;
Web: http://www.ncset.org;
E-mail: ncset@umn.edu

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